

that governments should be cautious in their use of tax-exempt financing, particularly when it is used to provide services that can be obtained through the private sector.

Since I introduced the bill, I have learned that it may raise significant issues that could affect the tax-exempt bonds of municipal electric systems. It was certainly not my intent to do anything that would affect the ongoing debate on the private use restrictions on these tax-exempt bonds.

As the Ranking Minority Member of the Energy and Power Subcommittee of the Commerce Committee, which has electric restructuring legislation pending before it, I believe it is prudent that I remain neutral on this issue. In fact I have encouraged the investor-owned utilities and public power systems to reach an agreement on private use and offer it to the Congress as a solution to this important restructuring issue.

Mr. Speaker, in order to make my intentions completely clear, were I permitted to withdraw the bill, I would do so. However, the custom in the House is not to permit bills to be withdrawn. As a result of the information I have received and the concerns that have been expressed since the introduction of the bill, I have decided not to seek further action on this legislation.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MARILYN PRICE BIRNHAK AND J. ROBERT BIRNHAK ON 35 YEARS OF SERVICE AND LEADERSHIP TO THE GREATER PHILADELPHIA COMMUNITY

HON. JOSEPH M. HOFFEL

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. HOFFEL. Mr. Speaker, my heartfelt congratulations to Mr. and Mrs. J. Robert Birnhak for being honored at the 35th anniversary celebration of Weight Watchers of Philadelphia on Saturday, September 18, 1999. Marilyn Price Birnhak along with the support of her husband J. Robert Birnhak founded Weight Watchers of Philadelphia thirty-five years ago. As founder and first president, she watched her group of eight members grow to roughly 20,000 members over the years, meeting in towns throughout the southeastern Pennsylvania and southwestern New Jersey areas.

Mr. and Mrs. Birnhak have also instilled in their children a sense of leadership, as their son John currently serves as the company's vice president of finance and their daughter Tracey is vice president of marketing and business development. All of their children are active in their communities.

The Birnhak family has contributed to Weight Watchers' tremendous growth in the Philadelphia area, as well as in the broader reaches of the franchise. Mr. Birnhak served as a past president of the Weight Watchers Franchise Association, and Mrs. Birnhak served first as vice president and then as president of the association.

In addition to their commitment to Weight Watchers, the Birnhaks have been leaders in the larger community as well. Mr. Birnhak has been active on the board of the Philadelphia Geriatric Center and Congregation Beth Sho-

lom in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania. Both he and Mrs. Birnhak have been honored by the State of Israel Bonds, Jewish Theological Seminary and Ben Gurion University in Israel. Mrs. Birnhak is also on the board of directors of the Philadelphia Theatre Company.

Mrs. Birnhak has contributed significantly to numerous health panels, seminars and health fairs. She has lectured at medical colleges and universities and appeared on radio and television talk shows.

Through Weight Watchers the Birnhaks have participated in a myriad of charitable endeavors for the United Way, the American Heart Association, the March of Dimes, the Alzheimer's Association, the Hero Scholarship Fund, Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, Inc. Feeds the Hungry, the Kidney Foundation, among others. In particular, Weight Watchers of Philadelphia, Inc. is to be commended for being the single largest contributor to the Philadelphia Hero Scholarship Fund.

Once again, my congratulations to a wonderful couple and their family.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. RICK LAZIO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. LAZIO. Mr. Speaker, because I was unavoidably detained, I was absent for the vote on the Bereuter/Wicker amendment to H.R. 417. This amendment would prohibit campaign contributions to federal candidates from any individual other than a U.S. citizen or national. Had I been present, I would have voted in favor of the Bereuter amendment in part because it would have been consistent with my record. On July 14, 1998, I voted for a similar amendment offered by Representative VITO FOSSELLA (vote #276 of the Second Session of the 105th Congress) during last year's debate on campaign finance reform.

THOMAS PUGH HONORED

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a noted community leader, Mr. Thomas E. Pugh, as he is honored by the Ethics Institute of Northeastern Pennsylvania at their annual dinner. I am pleased to have been asked to join in this event.

A former CEO of the John Heinz Institute of Rehabilitation in Wilkes-Barre, Tom Pugh now works at Allied Services in Scranton. He began there as director of communications and served later as vice president of corporate services better assuming his current role as vice-president of rehabilitation.

Tom is a dedicated professional who is active on both the local and international scene. Since 1994, Tom has worked with the Litewska Children's Hospital in Warsaw, Poland as a consultant on hospital privatization and foundation formation. He conducts a corporate program that provides equipment to the Association of Disabled People of Lithuania. Tom also serves as a consultant to Trnava

University Healthcare Management Education Project in the Slovakia Republic. Locally, Tom is active in the Arthritis Foundation, the James S. Brady Center, the Northeast Region Board of the Health Education Center, and the Northeast Regional Cancer Institute. He serves as Executive Vice-President of the Board of Pennsylvania Association of Rehabilitation Facilities.

Mr. Speaker, Tom Pugh is a dedicated professional and community leader. His commitment to improving the lives of the disabled both here and abroad is well known. The Ethics Institute of Northeastern Pennsylvania, which was established to increase the understanding of contemporary ethical issues in business, government, politics, health care and social issues, is wise to fete him. I send my sincere best wishes to Tom as he accepts this prestigious award.

TRIBUTE TO THE LUTKE FAMILY

HON. DAVE CAMP

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. CAMP. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the Lutke family of Marion, Michigan, whose farm was recently designated a Centennial Farm by Secretary of State Candice Miller and the Michigan Historical Commission.

This honor is bestowed on farms that have remained in the same family for 100 years or more. The Lutke farm was established in 1873. Today Harvey and Ruth Lutke harvest 280 acres of hay and corn.

The Centennial Farm designation recognizes the rich agricultural heritage of our great state. It pays tribute to the generations of families who have fed the world and passed on their legacy of hard work and determination to their children.

The Lutke family's success is a source of pride to Missaukee County, to Michigan, and our nation. I am pleased to have the opportunity to honor them today in the U.S. House of Representatives and I wish them many more generations of bounty.

GROWING DIGITAL DIVIDE

HON. JOHN B. LARSON

OF CONNECTICUT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 15, 1999

Mr. LARSON. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to draw attention to our nation's growing digital divide. The nation's economy is surging to unprecedented levels. The productivity of small business start-ups, driven by technology and American ingenuity, is bursting with entrepreneurial capital and the creation of unparalleled wealth.

Yet amidst the euphoria, there is growing concern about the alarming trend of limited access to the benefits of this "digit" economy.

In its July report, "Falling Through The Net," the Department of Commerce confirmed these fears about the information "haves" and "have nots" citing a persisting "digital divide" between the information rich and the information poor. A divide characterized by a disparity of race, gender, wealth and geography that grows disturbingly further apart.